



BLISSFEST LABS

Post Workshop Handbook

PATH TO WELL-BEING: THE INNER JOURNEY

WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY

First Nations Telehealth Network





WHERE WE ARE NOW

Thank you again for participating in this tailored version of The Healing Journey presentation. It was an afternoon of adventure and mental well-being.

We took a hike into a forest, that took longer than anticipated. It pushed us past our limits and brought us together. It was tough at times, but we came together to support each other when it was needed.

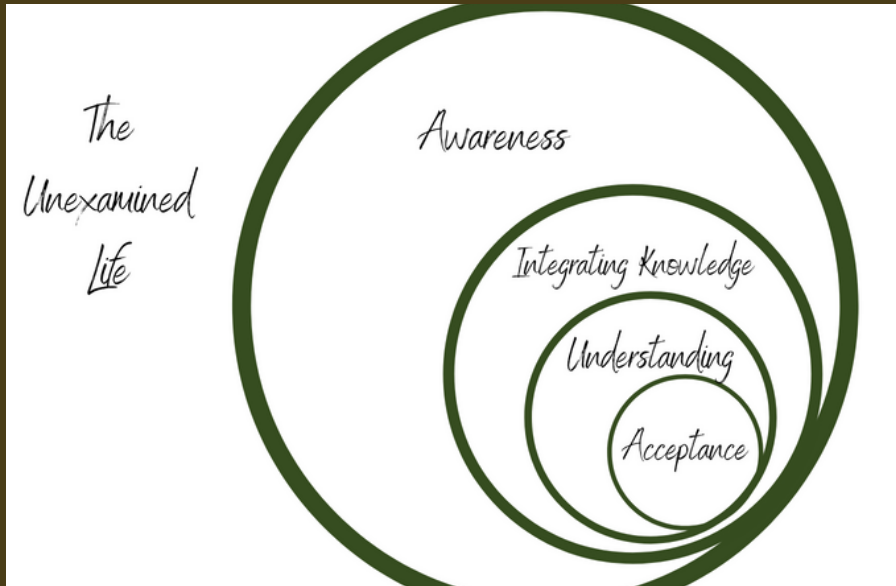
On the following pages, you'll see the information we covered on important concepts, as well links for your reference.

[SURVEY LINK](#)

We wish you well in your healing journey, at whatever stage you are. You are worthy of feeling well.



OUR MINDSET



Many of us have yet to move past the idea that unless we're hungry or tired, we're "okay". What we're exposed to initially becomes the foundation of our health knowledge, and this differs greatly among individuals.

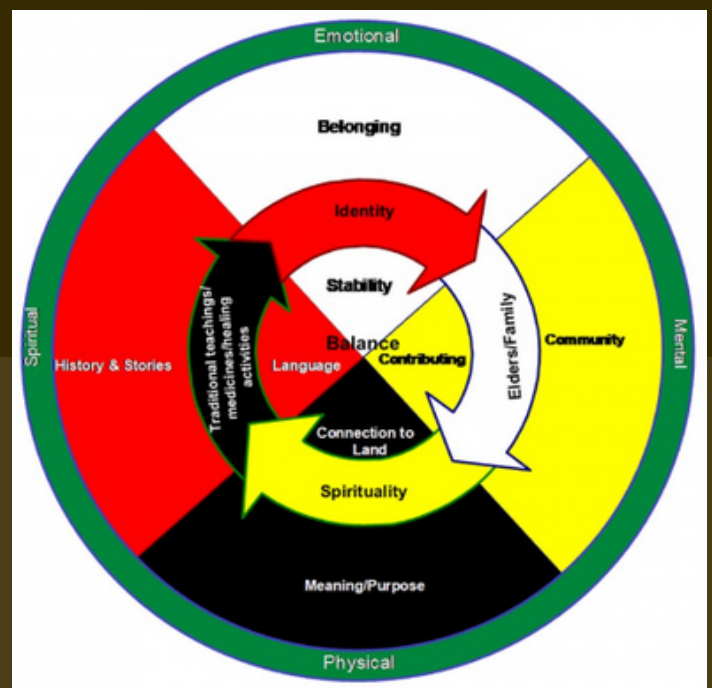
Everyone will perceive different modeling, have different experiences, and create different ideals of what healthy is.

“Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development.

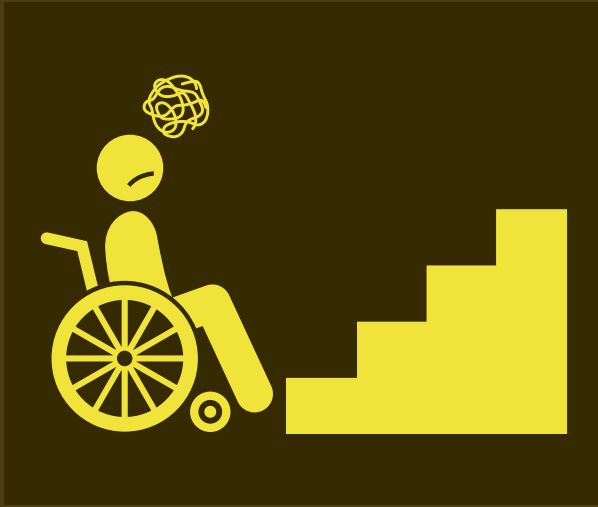
Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. It exists on a complex continuum, which is experienced differently from one person to the next, with varying degrees of difficulty and distress and potentially very different social and clinical outcomes.” WHO ([source](#))

THE MEDICINE WHEEL

Looking back, moving forward: a culture-based framework to promote mental well-being in Manitoba First Nations communities, the study was published online in December 2018 by the [International Journal of Culture and Mental Health](#). ([Source](#))



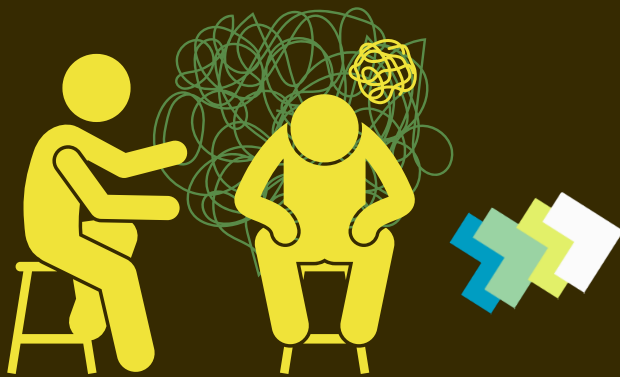
REFRAMING



"Even the little bits add up, give yourself a chance"

As mentioned during the presentation, reframing is a key skill when working with challenges. It's a learned strategy, which means we can all practice it. The story about waiting in the lineup helped show that we can do it on our own, or as you'll read from the American Psychological Association's description below, we can partner with a professional to help organize our thinking.

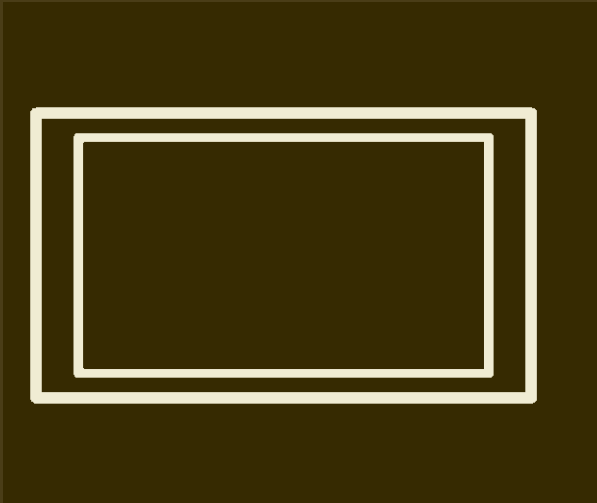
"Thought reframing helps you become more aware of how your thoughts are connected to your feelings and behaviours. Finding unhelpful thinking patterns and shifting them can make you feel better. That can help you better handle life's challenges. You may be more able to manage stress and to handle depression and anxiety." There is more information through [My Health Alberta](#).



The definition by the American Psychological Association is: n. a process of reconceptualizing a problem by seeing it from a different perspective. Altering the conceptual or emotional context of a problem often serves to alter perceptions of the problem's difficulty and to open up possibilities for solving it.

In psychotherapy, for example, the manner in which a client initially frames a problem may be self-defeating. Part of the therapist's response might be to reframe the problem and the thoughts or feelings that the client associates with it, so as to provide alternative ways to evaluate it. ([Source](#)).

BOX BREATHING



- Breathe in for four counts
- Hold your breath for four counts
- Breathe out for four counts
- Hold your breath for four counts
- You just completed one deep breath.
- Repeat.

There are many types of breathing exercises that help us regulate our emotions and support our mental state. Read up on more exercises like Calm Breathing and many more through [Anxiety Canada](#). Additional styles of breathing and recommended apps that feature these exercises can be found in this article from [eMentalHealth](#).

PATH TO WELL-BEING: THE INNER JOURNEY



How would we recognize that they're lost?

Perhaps they look confused or look like they don't have the necessary supplies. Maybe they have a numb look or vacant stare, you might see tears or hear some sniffles. Sometimes they look panicked and their breath is quick and shallow. What if they yelled at us, "Look away! There's nothing to see here!"

"It's like finding a way out of the woods, when you're lost. You go in circles, continually returning to the same place unless you stop and study the place you're in now, without calling it good or bad."



1. When I got lost, this great book "How to Get out of the Woods" was a big help for me.
2. It's going to be dark soon, so you should start going and see how far you get!
3. Remember your goal of getting home, and focus on doing things that will help with that.

Which one do you find most helpful? In reality, the 3rd option was the most helpful because it shows the most empathy and allows the individual to choose for themselves. This helps them to build confidence in their decision-making skills. Staying stuck is a huge challenge when we feel we're suffering and have no way out.

What would you say is a good way to cope with this stressful situation? Those answers you're coming up with can be great advice to yourself, the next time you find yourself frustrated and upset.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE



Another factor beyond discipline, that affects our subconscious, is cognitive dissonance—a mental conflict that occurs when your beliefs don't line up with your actions.

"Cognitive dissonance can be problematic if you start to justify or rationalize destructive behaviors or if you start to stress yourself out by trying to rationalize the dissonance.

When cognitive dissonance goes unaddressed, it can not only cause angst, but it can lead to impaired decision-making. On the flip side, however, when cognitive dissonance is properly addressed, it can lead to better decision-making and greater self-awareness." ([Source](#))



This was a trick question! All response options were valid signs: general discomfort that has no obvious or clear source, confusion, feeling conflicted over a disputed subject matter, people saying you're being a hypocrite, being aware of conflicting views and/or desired but not know what to do with them.

We also briefly covered the 3 ways you can reduce cognitive dissonance: changing existing beliefs, adding new beliefs, and minimizing the importance of the beliefs.

"What if someone took the choice away from you?"

"What if someone offered to do this for you?"

These questions come up when we might be tired of taking responsibility for our needs in life. Still, isn't it far scarier to let someone else lay out everything for us, understanding that they don't know us like we do?

"Look at your life's path as the path your soul chose to walk. The more complex and difficult, the greater the opportunity for growth. All great lives are born out of great tests."



"Train yourself to find water in a desert, and you'll have refreshment under any circumstances."



Life is hard and can feel tough, how we handle that can change the situation for the better faster than you think. Challenges don't wait until we're ready for them to affect us. How can we create space between stuff happening and our reactions?

If we practice gratitude for what we have, we'll be happier with what we have. This is a big help in grounding our emotions and clearing our thinking. It becomes easier to choose what to invest in or save for.

Which of these little experiments would you try to practice this? Feel free to think of others or recognize all the little experiments you're already doing!

1. *Wait a day to buy what you want, so you're sure you actually need it.*
2. *Picking something to save for, so it feels easier to spend less.*
3. *Try a new spending plan instead of a restrictive budget next month.*
4. *Picking up casual work or spending time on a side hustle to earn extra cash.*



What advice do you give someone to be ready for anything?

Perhaps it's a reminder that they've been through so much already, or they've survived all their previous "tough tests". Maybe it's that they've worked so hard that they really deserve the opportunity to get out there and find some support. Often we like to remind others that they have what it takes to succeed, we all deserve happiness and a feeling of achievement in life. Has anyone ever told you to take it one day at a time or put your heart into it?

If you're thinking "don't rely on your feelings right now?" and "give a new experience a chance?", why not instead make room to acknowledge those feelings and misgivings? That helps us to stay present when stressed, instead of repressing our emotions and intuitive knowing. We feel things for a reason, and it's a great opportunity to learn what feels like intuition and discern the impact of your emotions!





***"When the student is ready,
the teacher appears."***

***"Place yourself in a
position of learning, and
the ideal strategy will
become apparent."***

What if the situation is your teacher, and you must become the student?

A student mentality helps us work past the assumption that you know everything about the situation and potential solutions. If you think you already know, why would you ask for help or learn more? One of the strongest reframing techniques is putting ourselves in the mindset of a curious observer.

A student's mentality helps us work past the assumption that we know everything about the situation and all potential solutions. If you think you already know, why would you ask for help or learn more? One of the strongest reframing techniques is putting ourselves in the mindset of a curious observer.

How could mentors change a situation like this? They might help you get a wider perspective on the situation, learn techniques to manage yourself and the circumstances or stay with you until you feel more confident again.

Good mentors will slow us down, so we can focus on one step at a time, reinforcing that it doesn't happen overnight. They'll instill faith in the process so you can feel grounded and capable. Fabulous mentors will validate that your experience is real and reinforce that the story you're telling yourself matters in a real way.



What happens when we're HALT (also known as Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired)?

Losing our patience, our concentration, or our temper is common. As is breaking down and crying, snapping at other people, and rushing through actions without thinking. I'm sure you've thought up your own examples, as we expressed life can be hard, and it can surprise us. Especially when we've been telling ourselves a story of permanent stability, excellence in decision-making, and perfect behaviour at all times.

***"Pain is inevitable, but misery is optional.
We cannot avoid pain, but we can avoid joy."***

***"It's not the load you're carrying, but how
you're carrying it."***

"How we respond to life and reality, dictates whether or not we move through situations and the impact on us."

How could we support the emotional well-being of our group, as we're in the thick of this "adventure"? Here are a few approaches to think about:

1. *Remind each other of what we accomplished so far.*
2. *State that we were strong enough to get this far, we can keep going until we reach help.*
3. *Talk about how the reward will validate the effort.*
4. *Reinforce that we're worthy of success and making our way through this successfully.*

It can be tough to motivate ourselves and others when we feel down and out. Get curious about what works for you on your hard days and tough moments.



"It's not luck, nor random chance, that determines the quality and content of our lives. It is, very simply, our focus."

How can we bring home these rewards, of our new-found self-confidence and capacity? The knowledge we've learned about ourselves when in tough situations?

We hold them in our hearts. We write them in our journals. We recognize our fears and compassionately love ourselves through the learning.

This was an incredible experience together. Thank you for your courage here. May you be reminded of your support and community through this exercise.